South Asians in the '90s

Conference Report

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Introduction

In the last few years – through surveys, publications, conferences and cultural gatherings – the idea of a single South Asian community, comprising a number of communities, has gradually established itself in the political and cultural spheres of public life in Canada. This reflects a common identity, a bond already shared by members of this larger community, who have come to Canada from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sir Lanka. This area, commonly referred to as South Asia, has a population of close to one billion.

As we approach the end of this decade, the status of the South Asian community has, to a large degree, stabilized – in terms of its emerging new identity as Canadian; its incorporation into the workforce and economy; its representation in Canadian social life by stable family entities, including the first young adults brought up here; and its increasing contribution to life here.

This observation was the starting point of the conference. The conference then addressed itself to this fundamental question and its several corollaries: Progress has been made; what of the future? What strengths and weaknesses of the community can be identified? How can the former be consolidated and the latter overcome? What worthwhile goals can be posited for the community and what strategies adopted to implement them?

The defining problems of the conference have been collected by Riten Ray in his working notes at the beginning of this report. The conclusions that emerged are summarized at the end. The main purpose of the report is to provide a summary and guidelines for plans of action. With this end in mind, all the available written reports have been included, in the belief that the remaining contributions have been adequately addressed in the summary.

Members of the Advisory Committee for South Asians in the '90s

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Mr. Asaf Shujah
Mr. Murad Velshi

Mr. Riten Ray, Ministry Liaison

Terms of Reference

The Advisory Committee for the Conference on South Asians in the 90s

*(**Ministry** means Ministry of Citizenship and Culture.*
__Committee__ means Advisory Committee for the South Asian Workshop.)

1. Members are invited to sit on the advisory committee for the purpose of assisting ministry staff to implement the proposal for the workshops on South Asians.
2. The advisory committee is not a self-sustaining committee; it is transient in nature. This committee is expected to last a short term (as long as necessary to effectively and successfully complete all facets of this project, including follow-up and evaluation.)
3. The membership has no financial obligation to the project, though everyone will be encouraged to participate in the project's development, administration and implementation.
4. The nature and structure of this committee is non-religious and non-political.
5. The membership selects its own chairperson who ensures:
   a) meetings are managed effectively;
   b) full potential and expertise of each member is used;
   c) development of a sense of ownership of the project.
6. The advisory committee will select up to six of its members to form a program committee, whose primary responsibility will be to develop the program's format, content and evaluation strategy. Upon completion, they will submit a document outlining this to the advisory committee, for review and approval.
7. The program's critical path (developed by staff) will act as a guide to determine the nature and timing of the advisory committee's work.
8. Members represent community interests, not any community organizations; they sit on the committee by their own right.

South Asian Community

Is There One?

Prepared by Riten Ray as a working paper submitted to the conference advisory committee

- The term "community" may be defined and described in various ways. e.g. a community may refer to a number of people living in a certain area, possessing a sense of group identity and sharing a common culture. e.g. a native community. It is very difficult to find a community in an urban setting occupying an area and sharing a common culture. So we often define a community as a group of people living in a certain area. e.g. the Parkdale community.
- The term may refer to a functional entity shared by a group of people. e.g. the literary community or the scientific community. In this context the term "community" has no particular geographical base, but if we want to, we can add a spatial limitation to "community", e.g. the literary community of Ontario.
- The term "community" may also refer to a group of people determined by a category of classification. e.g. the Muslim community (category of religion), a learned community (category of learning), a minority community (category of number), Bengali-speaking community (category of language), a business community (category of profession), the Scottish community (category of ethnicity) and so on. This analysis is meant to be illustrative but not exhaustive.
- When we use the terminology "South Asian Community" we refer to a group of people in Canada who, or whose ancestors, came from South Asia. Is this simply a geographically-defined community? To answer this, let us consider the following.

  A community can be defined as taking into consideration some characteristics for the purpose of identifying them. It has a functional value, but it does not indicate that people belonging to this community are similar; e.g. when we use the term "an immigrant community" we all know it serves a purpose, a function, but we never maintain that they belong to one culture or hold one set of values. If a group of people displays or experiences similar behavioural patterns, lifestyles, historical vicissitudes, we can call this group of people a community.

- South Asians for many centuries have lived together, being influenced by each other's religion, culture, language and lifestyles. Here in Canada, their struggles for adaptation and accommodation are similar. Their ethnicity appears to be the same. The majority of the Canadian society perceives them as members of a visible minority group. This external determinant acts also as a cohesive force. Sociologically speaking, a group's identifying marks are also determined and defined by some external considerations. South Asians comprise less than two per cent of the total population of Canada and, because of their same ethnic origin and display of common lifestyles, the majority of society regards them as a community for the functional purpose.

- The aforesaid observations do not imply that South Asians are a homogeneous community that can be defined in terms of one religion, one culture, one language, or one set of values. South Asians are a multicultural community. This functional definition emphasizes the element of commonality among South Asians, not that of differences.

- However, the tendency often has been strong to overstress the differences, as if stressing the differences were an argument against the likeness. Differences are not to be denied; what is being denied is that they are biologically significant.

Community Maturity

Prepared by Riten Ray as a working paper submitted to the conference advisory committee

The concept "community maturity" is a complex one. We easily understand biological, psychological or behavioral maturities. When we use the terminology "community growth" or "community maturity," we tacitly assume that a community is a type of organism. Whether a community is an aggregate of discrete individuals or a living force having a unity of mind (however, vague) is not an issue here. The issue here is what we really mean by "community maturity" and how we can determine it.

Before we explain this concept, it is necessary to mention that the concept "community maturity" is a sociological notion tinged with cultural, psychological ideas. Sociology, as a social science, studies "groups," not individuals, and when it relies on psychology, it is not individual psychology but social psychology that it is concerned with.

Keeping this in mind, let us define in simple terms the concept of "community maturity." It indicates primarily an awareness of social responsibility; determination of common goals (common ground); human resource development, and enhancing the quality of life of its members.

By implication, it follows that when we say it is a mature community (it is always a comparative term) it means:

- the participation level of members is very broadly based;
- it is resource development oriented;
- it is capable of responding to new situations without much stress or distress, as it develops mechanisms to deal with differences and to negotiate results by consensus;
- its activities are needs based, and it explores new goals and meanings for the betterment of human life.

What are the determinants of community maturity? (We shall discuss some fundamental traits only.)

In the way that we look at an individual's maturity, we can also look at (not so rigidly) a community's maturity:

- good health;
- good communication and interpersonal relationships;
- personal organization;
- leadership;
- broadly-based participation (social, political, economic);
- resourcefulness;
- life-goal orientation, etc.

Let us apply them to a community

- good public health – health in the workplace, family, etc. (common phrase: very healthy community);
- a community in which there are communication channels through print and electronic media, meeting places, workshops on issues, discussion groups, etc.; in fine, it is based on shared knowledge; there are internal and external networks;
- viable community organizations serving the diverse community needs; members capable of using organizations as developmental tools;
- leadership is essentially to make things happen; in a community situation, it means a community capable of making decisions involving its members and bringing about the intended changes necessary to follow an agreed-upon plan of action;
- a community in which the participation level of its members is broadly based; not only does it encourage participation, but it incorporates everyone's input while it seeks its political, social and economic goals;
- a mature community is one that is constantly developing its human resource base; it is ultimately people, human beings, who determine the fate of a community (in a technological society, we often de-emphasize this element);
- a community that has well-defined goals to seek a high level of participation; without common goals and without commitment, it is impossible.

On Community Excellence

Prepared by Riten Ray as a working paper submitted to the conference advisory committee

It is not possible to define a single factor or principle that determines community excellence. What follows are descriptions of an excellent community given to me by some of my colleagues in the Citizenship Development Branch, and I have added some of my own. You will note that an excellent community is described in terms of its behaviour (ability) and characteristics. (They all are ideal.)

Please note that these descriptions of community excellence are in the North American context. These descriptions are expected to differ from culture to culture, country to country; the concept of "excellence" has a spatio-temporal dimension. There are many variables in it. Add your own and review this description in preparation for the workshop.

An excellent community refers to:

- high leadership skills – effective organization, high degree of voluntary participation, self-sufficiency (not total), and community awareness and resources;
- total involvement of members in the efforts of the community – well organized and concerned, full participation in the decision-making process of the community;
- good information exchange and respect for others;
- high quality of life, networking, individual responsibility and accountability;
- ability to generate creative and meaningful activities for its members; ability to respond to new situations; ability to take initiative, and influence – or form opinions that will impact on – decision making; ability to work with other communities;
- constant exploration and development of new resources for the betterment of its members; emphasis on co-operation and minimization of conflicts;
- preservation, promotion and development of culture; adaptation and accommodation of other cultures; respect for human dignity and rights.

The text of the conference program is reprinted on the following pages.

South Asians in the '90s

IN SEARCH OF COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE

Holiday Inn
Downtown Toronto
Saturday, November 29, 1986

A Conference on South Asians in Ontario

Sponsored by
the Citizenship Development Branch
Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture

South Asians in Search of Community Excellence

Background

This is a community assessment project designed to determine resources and strategies to further the goals of the South Asian community.

South Asians are now talking about 'participation', 'main-streaming' to mitigate prejudices, and being involved in different community organizations to make self-assertions and discover spaces for themselves. The concept of 'community' takes as its basic premise the realization that the will to participate and to get involved must be instilled in the people and that the people must be encouraged to define their individual private concerns in terms of larger issues of social structure.

One of the basic aims of community organization is the development of people who are capable of defining their own reality, identifying their own problems and determining their future. Community members are encouraged to develop a strategy for participation and depend upon their own resources.

Community resources include people, their knowledge and skill, wealth, services. This needs to be explored and developed to promote, maintain and protect social functioning of individuals, families and groups.

Community development, in essence, is a process of social action directed at identifying needs, resources and required changes. It is critical, therefore, that the community develop a framework for qualitative participation by assessing available resources.

To begin the process, South Asians are expected to focus on their community as the primary resource. In this sense, a community development process begins with an assessment of its resources.

PROJECT GOAL: **Assessment of community resources in terms of community goals.**

COMMUNITY GOAL: **Achieve access and equal participation by the South Asian Community within the mainstream of Canada's social, political, cultural and economic environment.**

Program

Morning

8:30-9:00 a.m.	Registration and Coffee Place: Second Floor Foyer
9:00 a.m.	**Welcome:** Mr. Audi Dharmalingham, Chairperson Advisory Committee for the Conference **Session Chairperson:** Mr. Muin Muinuddin
9:15 a.m.	**Keynote Address: South Asians: Promise and Prospects** Dr. K. Ishwaran (Professor of Sociology, York University)
10:00 a.m.-12:15	**Workshops on Community Resources** Four concurrent workshops deal with the following resource areas:

1. The Art of Persuasion
Place: St. David North
Designed to discuss some modes of persuasion e.g., the influence peddling by ethnic groups, how to get into political lobbying, do's and don'ts. Does lobbying on networking necessarily ensure community growth?
Facilitator: Dr. Ahmad Ijaz
Resource: Mr. Paul Malvern (Writer, Quebec City)

2. Individual Growth and Development
Place: St. David South
Designed to focus on the orientation to the social, political, cultural, and economic milieu, contrasting cultures and value-shift from the past to the present; assessment of social and life skills needs; technical and professional skills assessment and planning for accomplishments.
Facilitator: Dr. Ari Dassanayake
Resource: Dr. Gulshan Malik (Psychologist)
Dr. Prem Gupta (Psychologist)

3. Volunteerism
Place: Terrace West
Designed to animate discussion on the qualities and capacities of voluntary action and its potential to respond to the changing pattern of the South Asian community in the '90s.
As voluntary action for a community is a learning process akin to maturation in an individual, innovation, flexibility, advocacy and management of change are acquired in the process.
How can we as a community improve the financial viability of our voluntary sector without increasing our dependency on government?
Facilitator: Mrs. Sue Edwards
Resource: Mrs. Mubarka Alam (a Community Volunteer)
Mrs. Sarita Bopanna (a Community Volunteer)
Mr. Deo Kernahan (a Community Volunteer)

Program (Cont.)

4. Community Maturity

Place: Terrace East

Designed to highlight some fundamental aspects of community maturity and growth, to examine the nature and levels of maturity with respect to South Asians.

Facilitator: Mr. Bala Nambiar

Resources: Dr. Vandra Lea Masemann (Multicultural Consultant)

Dr. Harish Jain (Professor: Faculty of Business, McMaster University)

12:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m. **Luncheon Session**

Place: Commonwealth Centre

Session Chairperson: Mr. Bala Nambiar

Luncheon Speaker: Hon. Lily Munro, Minister of Citizenship and Culture

Afternoon

2:30 p.m.-4:00 p.m. **Plenary Session**

Place: Commonwealth Centre

Experience Sharing

Designed to share experiences of some South Asians who have been able to discover their spaces in chosen areas of the Canadian system. The intent is to learn from their interaction while recognizing their achievements.

Session Chairperson: Mr. Pran Dev

a) Mr. Kartar Gandy (President, Signtech Inc.)
b) Mr. Rafiq Dawood (President, H. SLAP Inc.)
c) Dr. Moyez Vassanji (Editor: South Asian Reviw)
d) Ms. Menaka Thakkar (Indian Classical Dancer)
e) Mr. Arup Das (Engineer, Nuclear Energy Board)
f) Dr. Victor Kumar–Misir (Inventor of translingual communications)

4:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m. **Wrap up:** Mr. Alok Mukherjee

4:30 p.m. **Vote of Thanks:** Mr. Murad Velshi

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South Asian Communities Promises and Prospects

Keynote address at the opening of the conference.

Dr. K. Iswaran

The differences among South Asian Communities, in cultural, political and historical terms, cannot be ignored. There are many sources of conflict brought to Canada from the home countries in the South Asian region. Nevertheless, human beings are capable of learning, adjusting to, and using the resources of a variety of environments. In their new environment in Canada, the settlers from South Asia, despite all the differences and conflicts relevant in their home countries, must learn to find their new identities in the context of large-scale ethnic organizations; they have their place and purpose. What is needed is the addition of large-scale organizations, subsuming the small-scale ones, because it is the large-scale organizations that constantly confront them in their everyday life in this country. The simple conclusion of the observations presented is: organize more and more comprehensively, or get absorbed.

My object is to share with you the results of some hard thinking that I have done over the years about the hopes and aspirations of the South Asian communities in Canada. I have no doubt that many of you have also been concerned with such issues and have reached your own different conclusions. I shall submit my views as a concerned South Asian and a practicing social scientist. It is my hope that serious efforts will soon follow to sort out the practically important elements in the variety of views we hold, and concrete steps will be taken without further delay to work out effective plans to understand and resolve the real everyday problems of the South Asian communities in this country that can be understood and resolved only on a **community** basis. In my view, the time for purely polite observations is long past. For the benefit of all concerned – indeed, in order to be heard at all – we must now lay it on thick; we must speak out, and act if necessary. In my view, it is necessary.

In order to clarify and draw your attention to the vital issues as I see them, let me for a moment play the role of the Devil's Advocate.

Let me challenge the view that the South Asian communities in Canada, as communities, have any special problems that, to ensure better prospects, must be handled on a community basis – and not just individual bases. In this fashion, once we have considered the other side, we can learn how best to strengthen our own side, and possibly bring the other side over to our own constructive views.

One may ask several questions. Let me offer you a sample. There are those who can argue and ask: In this land of liberty, in this new homeland

of ours where multiculturalism flourishes, why should it be necessary at all to think in terms of the prospects of the South Asian communities? Are we not all Canadian? Whatever the promises and prospects of the South Asian communities, are they not the promises and the prospects of the Canadian nation as a whole? Does it not detract from the national strength to keep pointing up the various ethnic problems and prospects? Moreover, if the problems are there, would it not be better to let them get resolved in the natural course of things? Everything else apart, the most important question is: Can we really even think in terms of the concept of "South Asian Communities?" What **is** South Asia?

We all know that the geographical region so designated is bristling with religious, linguistic and other cultural and political differences and conflicts; it will be totally unrealistic to wish such conflicts away. When the people in South Asia are divided, it is absurd to think that they would be united for concerted action in fulfilling their aspirations and survival in the Canadian environment. Will it not be much better if we, as individuals, just mind our own business?

We must not ignore such questions and what they imply. The attitudes and views involved in such questions are undoubtedly there; and they are, in some quarters, quite strong. If we wish them away, the chances of concerted thought and action are doomed. We will, instead, face them, understand them, and resolve them.

On one hand, many South Asians, themselves, may tend to stress their differences. But on the other hand, many outsiders – even highly informed ones – often tend to ignore the differences. In his massive and well-known studies, entitled the **Asian Drama**, Gunnar Myrdal, the liberal Swedish economist, outlines a conception of unity of all the South Asian peoples; there is a way of life that, according to Myrdal, unites them.

There is a very general sense in which Myrdal is correct. Somehow, when South Asians abroad happen to run into each other, there are certain bonds of common experiences they feel. I have felt it repeatedly. I am sure many of you have felt it too. The feeling of commonness may come from skin colour and other physical factors, from a shared consciousness of Western colonial domination and humiliation, from a practical realization that, no matter how good you might be, no matter how genuine the official policy of multiculturalism might be, when the time comes for choice, your bosses in the Western world may not consider you good enough. Myrdal does not note and discuss such elements of circumstances that unite the South Asians. But I know them, and do not deny that you know them too. Our colonial and cultural heritage from the past does

indeed provide us at least with the foundations for a realistic sense of unity among us – a sense that may be used for concerted action for our benefit within the framework of Canada as a nation.

We have, thus, these two approaches, or conceptions: The first (often a foreigner's viewpoint) is one in which South Asia is a mass–undifferentiated, characterized by an overstated unity. The second, (often the viewpoint of some of the South Asian communities themselves) is one in which past animosities, or the prevalent ones in the home countries, must be continuously resuscitated all over the world.

Even though India and Pakistan may be at war, these are labelled together in this country. These are the highlights of the reality of South Asian lives, in this country and in the home countries.

In the background of the above observations, the point I wish to make (to lay the foundation for observations I will soon make) relates to my interests. The point, baldly stated, is quite simple, but with immense implications. The point is that human beings, in general, are animals with a virtually endless ability to learn – to learn to adjust to changing environments and to learn to tap different environments to their own advantage. It is on account of this learning facility that human beings, all over the world, despite the evils they have inflicted on each other, have managed to move from the cave age to the space age. If we have managed to move from our cave-dwelling ancestors to this meeting today, we have managed to learn to adjust to changing environments and, at least occasionally, to use the changes to our benefit.

It is this immensely versatile human ability to learn – to adjust, to challenge, to re-form the resources or changing environments – that, when all is said and done, is the ultimate basis of any hope for survival and continued overall prosperity in a world in which so many things have been screwed up because of the refusal of some people in power to learn anything from past experiences. What should we, the South Asians, do? Should we continue to use the human ability to learn, survive and prosper? Should we refuse to learn, and go under? I can only pose the alternatives.

My option, however, is to continue to learn and, in the light of the results of such learning, act. I now wish to submit to you for **your** thought and action, some of the implications of this option.

True, there may be 101 differences and conflicts among various South Asian communities in the home countries. In Canada, however, thousands of miles away from our home countries, we are placed in

situations with common problems. The problems arise from our distinctly South Asian heritage of technological backwardness, from Western political domination, and from religious, political and other dimensions of social diversity. We are united by the fact of this heritage. In the endless emigration of human beings all over the globe, we find ourselves in the situation where the dominant ethnics distinguish us from the many others. Despite all our differences and conflicts in the home countries, we learn to think of ourselves as South Asians in this country. Those of us who can make this mental effort, can then see that we have many, many common problems, requiring community efforts for solution, as distinguished from individual efforts.

Those capable of making the individual efforts will, no doubt, continue to make them. We are not, in a sense, concerned with them, except for their support for those who have not been able to make it on their own, for one reason or another. Regardless of country, language, religion or any other barrier, our central concern is with those from the South Asian countries who, for whatever reasons, need help for survival and development. What I have in mind is vividly evident in the Jewish case in North America. Homeless and distrusted throughout centuries, the Jews have made it – at all levels of power – in North America where it matters. How do the South Asians–a minority like the Jews – compare? You know the answer. Let us think about it a bit.

Helping a Jewish cause by the Jewish population has indeed become a way of life. Will the South Asian help a needy South Asian? Perhaps. In some cases. But there is nothing like "community support" – the kind of support that does not fall heavily on an individual but, shared by a community, could become really powerful.

What happens, instead, in the South Asian context is that, usually, for whatever reasons, certain settlers do well for themselves. They acquire houses in comfortable neighbourhoods; their children go to good schools and often do well. Some of them buy more houses, more fridges, more cars, and the rest. The story of happy families thus goes on and on. This story, so far as it goes, is undoubtedly excellent.

At the same time, however, there is the parallel story of South Asian immigrants–discriminated against in jobs, as in other spheres of life. We do not know the statistics of such people. No one demands them; no one collects them. But such people are there – lonely in an alien world, miserable under a mass of indignities, ignorant of possible ways of redemption. Pushed by the forces of the new world and pulled by those of the old, they live a life of perpetual panic, bewilderment, disillusion and, at times, disintegration.

We all know that various ethnic categories from South Asia have formed their own diversity of groups and self-help societies. They are important. They show the inherent urge for survival through co-operation. Such groups, in my view, should be wholeheartedly encouraged. In the absence of such groups and societies, life and living in an alien land will be much more frustrating than it is at present. Having admitted the importance of such groups and societies, I do not see that, by themselves, they can accomplish much for the well-being of their members in this highly-competitive world. What is being done by these groups is good and important, and must, no doubt, be done. But this is not enough to restore human dignity or to provide the groups and societies with the clout needed in a competitive world to make one's presence felt. While these polite and interesting things should go on, something radically different, something constructively aggressive, something connected up with the idea of continuous development and future images and promises, is desperately needed.

That **something**, whatever else its character, has to have the power of numbers and the force of a large organization. In this country, there is no other way of being heard or seen. It is not an issue of not being heard or seen by the government – provincial or federal or, indeed, municipal: that issue is important. But what is more important in everyday life is being seen and heard by the common populace. The only thing that can accomplish much is a combination of small and large organizations. The Jews show this and the Italians vindicate it. The people of South Asian origins have enough small societies. What is now needed is a network of organizations large enough, unified enough, constructive enough, to be powerful in ways that matter.

What is needed is not elimination of all differences, or even of conflicts brought into Canada from the home countries of South Asia. It would be unrealistic to expect this impossibility. But if we cannot learn to adjust ourselves in our new environment, we shall simply vanish as a category of people, the South Asians. The only way to adjust in, and use the resources of, the modern Western world is to organize on as large a scale as possible, because the world we are confronted with is similarly organized. In realizing the promises we made for ourselves while we emigrated, we must now unite and build a network of institutions making our community a stable, dynamic and integrated one. ▶

The Art of Persuasion

Speech at the Workshop on the Art of Persuasion.

Paul Malvern

Over the last 20 years or so Canadian society and politics have been transformed in a way that could not have been envisaged. Perhaps the most profound expression of this political transformation has been the development and extension of the importance of lobbying – the "art of persuasion." In this paper I would like to outline briefly the forces that led to this new form of political power and struggle, show how the South Asian community in Canada can better use lobbying techniques to advance the interests of its members and, we hope, those of all Canadians at the same time.

Underlying Forces

The development of lobbying in Canada has been the result of a number of profound processes and forces in operation over the last few decades. Some of the most important of these in terms of their influence on lobbying are the following:

1. A rapid change in the Canadian population. One part of this is, of course, the actual numeric increase in the population. More people means more problems and more complexity – both the meat of lobbying. In addition, there has been a dramatic increase in the process of urbanization. This, too, leads to more complexity and more social problems. Perhaps most important, though, has been the change in social, cultural and economic relationships resulting from changes in immigration policies and the entrance of more and more women into the economy. No longer is social, economic and political power the sole preserve of white males of Anglo-Saxon or French Canadian origins. The result of all of this change has been a wild explosion of vastly differing interests, many of them conflicting ones.
2. A dramatic rise in the expectations of Canadians vis-a-vis government, and what it can, or should, provide.
3. Changes in basic values. Two key ones were the increased support for the value of egalitarianism, and a concomitant decline in deference to authority. The result has been that individuals and groups are less prepared simply to accept or react to the policies adopted and imposed by their "betters." Canadians have come to expect and indeed demand prior consultation and a willingness by government to listen to them at every stage.

4. The increased quality and speed of information dissemination. In the past the population often did not know of the workings of government or the actions of politicians until it was too late. Now, the media make all actions of civil servants and politicians – even their seeming thoughts and intentions – public knowledge.

5. A lessening of the importance of the individual and an increasing importance of groups in the thinking of decision makers and opinion leaders such as government officials, academics, religious leaders, business and union leaders and the media. The result has been the increasing trend toward decision making based on the perceived needs and powers of various economic, linguistic, sexual, ethnic, racial and religious groups.

6. A constant acceleration in the rate of change of society, the economy and technology.

7. A decline in the importance of elected officials, especially at the federal and provincial levels, and an ever-growing concentration of power in the office of the prime minister (or premier), the cabinet, and, more importantly, in unelected bodies like the Privy Council, the judiciary and the civil service. Former Prime Minister Trudeau commented once that members of Parliament were nobodies 20 minutes from Parliament Hill. Political observers James Gillies and Jean Pigott have remarked in response that the reverse is in fact the case. They note, "It is on Parliament Hill, when assessed in terms of impact on policy formation, that MPs are nobodies. Parliament does not have significant input in policy formation..." With MPs and MPPs no longer providing significant input based on their in-depth knowledge of the needs of ordinary Canadians, those who really make the decisions that affect us and set the agenda for the future have little idea of what the country is really like. Lobbyists and "persuaders" are only too happy to step in to fill this information gap.

All of the above forces combine to create a situation favourable to a body politic and political system where the "art of persuasion" as practised by organized groups and interests becomes a virtual matter of survival for these groups and their members. This is, in my opinion, the situation in which groups like those representing the South Asians in Canada find themselves.

That being the case, let us have a look at those factors that determine success or failure in the art of persuasion.

Success and Failure in the Art of Persuasion

Essentially, the success or failure of any lobby group is determined by:

- the socio-economic class position of lobby leaders;
- the organizational structure of the lobby;
- knowledge of the appropriate loci of power and the ability to influence them;
- an appropriate lobbying strategy and skill (and a little bit of luck) in implementing this strategy;
- the degree of independence of the lobby.

Let us look at each one of these points in detail with an eye to identifying that mix of qualities and approaches that make for a "perfect" lobby.

1. High socio-economic class position of lobby leaders. Much as we might not like to admit it, Canada is not, never has been, and almost certainly never will be, an egalitarian society. Constitutional guarantees like the Charter of Rights and various human rights codes may attempt to outlaw various forms of racial, linguistic (Quebec Bill 101 to the contrary) and sexual inequality. The problem is that the real and major source of most inequality – class standing and the class system – remains intact and, if anything, becomes more potent as time goes by. Money and status count for more in our society than most of us realize or wish to admit. Any group wishing to be successful at the "art of persuasion" must take this reality – the persistence and power of the class system – into account. The reason is that the class standing of a lobby group's leaders will strongly determine the group's success at lobbying. This is not my subjective assessment, but rather a matter of fact, based on empirical evidence. Consider the table below.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESOURCES OF DIRECTORS[2]

Proportion Ranking High[a]

Resource	Business %	Labour %	Prof-Ed. %	Welfare %	Instrumental[b] %
SES	76	30	86	81	58
Income	58	18	38	30	12
Experience	21	24	15	16	18
Membership	57	30	60	50	33
Access	31	13	21	18	16

[a] "High" refers to the following conditions: SES, based on education and occupation, in the two highest levels (I and II) in the Hollingshead index, **Social Class and Mental Illness**.

[b] "Instrumental" groups refers to a residual category, comprising "non-economic" groups, including religious, socio-recreational, ethnic, fraternal-social, etc.

The inference to be drawn from this table is clear. The power of a lobby comes in part from the class standing of its leaders. The only group of lobbies in the above table that does not rely heavily on leaderships possessed of high socio-economic status are those in the area of trade unionism. It is important to note that the union movement is seen by most observers as being perhaps one of the least successful at the influence game.

All of this should come as little surprise and bears an important lesson. Those lobby representatives who wish to succeed should seem, as much as possible, to embody the values and charactertistics of those they seek to influence. Where possible, they should dress the same, act the same, have the same sort of education and friends and belong to the same clubs and organizations.

2. Organizational structure. There is much evidence to suggest that lobbies that have bureaucratic structures with permanent staffs fare better in the long run than those with free-wheeling and highly democratic structures and high turnovers in staff and leadership. This has profound significance for lobby strategy as we shall see.

3. Knowledge of the appropriate loci of power and the ability to influence them. The Canadian political system is a highly complex one. The appropriate locus of power for a given issue might lie within the federal, provincial or municipal sphere. Furthermore, within each of these spheres the appropriate locus of power might exist with elected officials, the bureaucracy, the judiciary or an appointed regulatory body. Even there the identification of the correct "pressure point" is difficult, for the reality of power is often different from the theory. In some cases the key to successfully influencing government might lie with an informal power holder such as a back-room player in one of the political parties such as a "bagman" or "advisor." To make a mistake in the identification of the right pressure point is not to just risk wasting time, money and effort. Lobbying targets expect you to be sufficiently professional to know how the system works, and who is who. They may actually become negative to your cause if they suspect or feel that you have not done your homework. Thus, there are real risks to such mistakes. This need for a deep understanding of the system and its players is one of the major reasons for having permanent staff assigned to the job of influencing, for it takes a long time and a lot of hard work to become sufficiently knowledgeable.

4. An appropriate lobbying strategy. Strategy is everything. If your strategy is correct, tactics become secondary since they will fall more or less

naturally from your strategy. A successful lobbying strategy is all important since it will give you a major competitive advantage over your rivals who shoot from the hip and operate on an ad-hoc basis. A successful strategy will contain the following components:

a) A long-range plan with associated events and times by which you can measure your performance. If you do not have a target, you will not know where you are going. If you do not have milestones in place for performance measurement, you will never know how you are doing. You can always change your plan, but you can never win consistently if you do not have a long-range plan of some sort in place.

b) Constant monitoring of the environment for changes in the possession and use of political, social, economic and ideological power.

c) The establishment of permanent and reliable friends and contacts in all levels of government and in all the political parties. This is what I call the "pennies from heaven" theory of power. You never know who you will need, or when, so it is important to make sure that everything and everyone you are ever likely to need is lined up, well in advance. Usually, when a crisis or major emergency does occur, there is not enough time to go scrambling for friends and allies if they are not already available, well-disposed to you, or in your debt.

d) The establishment of permanent and reliable friends and contacts in the media. Knowledge and opinion are a formidable source of power. Having such friends and contacts maximizes the probability of your being able to make your perception the dominant one.

e) Creation of a permanent lobbying presence.

f) Creation of a good public image. It is not just the "big boys" who count. People count, too, especially in the long run. Possessing a good public image means that the public understands, and has a sympathy and affection for you, your group and its aims. This neglect of the general public's view has probably been one of the biggest failures of most groups. There has often been a feeling among lobbyists that all you have to do is to get the government and media on your side and the public can be bludgeoned, brainwashed and legislated into compliance. This may work in the short term (five to 10 years). Such an attitude, though, might very well lead to long-term disaster. Politicians and the media are notoriously fickle. They will ultimately go the way the crowd goes. Ask yourself this, "Will the crowd love you or hate you in the future?"

g) An appropriate stance and sensitivity in approaching government. Key to this is:

   i) selling your demands to government on the basis of how they represent a benefit to it, not to you; it is harsh to say but is, alas, sadly true; in the long run your problems do not matter to them; what does matter is how they can solve their own problems and how they can meet their own needs (like reflection and campaign financing in the case of politicians, or promotion and career development in the case of civil servants);

   ii) a collaborative rather than confrontational style; demonstrations seldom work; they and other such displays are signs of weakness, not strength;

   iii) avoidance of harsh rhetoric or histrionics; be calm, cool, restrained – just like those in power;

   iv) insistence on obtaining a suitably high return on your lobbying investment. Many lobbies have low self-esteem, low expectations or poor knowledge of how the lobbying game pays off. The result is that they get bought off with scraps from the table instead of being an important guest at the banquet table. The lesson is clear. Think big and demand to be paid off as well as others are.

5. Independence. We have all heard the expression, "He who pays the piper will want to call the tune." Nowhere is this truer than in the area of lobbying and influence. At present the overwhelming source of funds and political support for groups in the multicultural area is government. There is a terrible seductiveness about this. Communities find a ready source of funding in big brother so the government seems an unceasing friend, always to be trusted, never to be feared or suspected. In addition, government always seems to be there with heavy political support in the form of royal commissions, human rights legislation and bodies, ministries and their staff. Life is just so much easier with this powerful friend. There is a very great danger in all of this, though. Clearly, there is no "free lunch." One clear possibility is that the government may seek to use this relationship with communities like your own in ways that you may not wish. One possible ploy might be to manipulate communities and their leaders in such a way that they become little more than "cheering sections" for the government and its policies. It may also attempt to manipulate communities' goals and agendas in order to bring them more in line with the government's aims. Recent revelations concerning the Mulroney government and the behaviour of the Trudeau government in its latter years prove just how great a danger this is.

Real independence is the key in any strategy. It alone ensures that the real goals of a group will be those that correspond to the needs and wishes of its members, and not those of government.

Current Problems and Future Dangers

Below are some of the current problems and possible future dangers that I foresee for your group, and in the multicultural lobby area generally.

1. Political "ghettoization." This term implies being restricted to a narrow band of the political, economic and social spectrum. The result would be that members of the South Asian community would be left on the periphery of mainstream Canadian society. The community's input would be restricted to the area of multiculturalism, race relations and a special group of issues, like immigration for instance. The payoff would similarly be restricted to low-level patronage involving human rights commissions, and commissions and task forces in the areas of immigration, cultural policy and race relations where the payoff in terms of "goodies" is rather low.

2. Bad public image and lack of public support for aims and interests of the South Asian communities and their members. Here are some of the possible sources of such an event.

   a) **Obvious** involvement in contentious or violent struggles in home countries. There is an unspoken expectation among most Canadians that immigrants or new citizens will leave the old quarrels of their home countries behind. This is, of course, a somewhat unrealistic expectation, given human nature. Nevertheless, it is a real and prevalent current of thought and, as such, must be taken into account by would-be "persuaders." My own suggestion is that if your conscience forbids your withdrawing yourself from the struggle, at least do not get caught, and do not seek a high profile for your involvement in the Canadian media. The attention you undoubtedly will get in the Canadian media will feel good at the time, but will almost certainly hurt you and your "brothers and sisters" living in Canada.

   b) Demands and strategies that do not take into account the needs and aspirations of groups and individuals who make up the "mainstream" or "majority" group. Particularly dangerous are those demands that seem to be part of a "zero-sum game;" that is to say, "If I win, you lose. If you win, I lose." Good examples of such are affirmative action and job quota programs. To many of you such

may seem logical and just a matter of simple justice. To many in the "majority group," especially the most economically vulnerable, such programs seem a terrible threat to their economic surivival. The "zero-sum game" approach invites a terrible backlash whose bitterness could last for generations.

c) A lobbying reliance on just influencing the media, government and judiciary. No campaign of influence can ever be blessed with long-term victory without winning the hearts and minds of the people. Government and the media are often a poor mirror of just what the wishes and opinions of the people are.

3. Lack of contacts in all political parties. Political fortunes rise and fall. To have contacts in just one political party or to give unconditional support to just one political party is to condemn oneself and one's group to an unnecessary feast or famine cycle. All of this is painfully obvious in conjunction with the present Mulroney government in power in Ottawa. The deafening silence in Ottawa on the subject of multiculturalism is more a result of this failure on the part of ethnic communities to develop contacts in the Conservative party than an actual lack of interest on its part. The lesson is clear. Cover **all** your bets.

4. Poor payoff for your community. Some of the possible sources of such a danger are:

a) Political "ghettoization." Payoffs in the multicultural, race relations, and human rights areas are woefully poor. The real "goodies" come from mainstream issues and involvement. (What constitutes "mainstream" is of course contentious. My own view is that mainstream issues are largely those involving economic and fiscal policies. Others will, no doubt, view this differently.)

b) Poor playing of the political game. In my view, the worst danger of this for your community would come from voting patterns and support for a given political party that was predictable, automatic and unconditional. The highest payoff for such support would come in communities whose leaders were able to control to some extent the votes and support of their people, and so could offer it to the highest bidder.

c) Poor self confidence. If you ask for a high payoff, you will get a high payoff. Settle for a low payoff and that is just what you will get. Communities with high self-confidence normally fare the best in the race for political rewards.

d) A lobbying orientation that is insular and that thinks in a small and narrow manner. Such an orientation would be dedicated to seeking special protection from the "majority" population and exceptions to, and exemption from, legislation resulting from the larger group's perceived political agenda. A winning strategy with a far bigger payoff would envisage one's community being accepted as a full and organically integral part of the larger society and policy and, as such, itself become the majority. As such, a group such as Canadian South Asians would be able to determine the national agenda rather than seeking protection from it.

In my opinion one of the greatest problems to date with the lobbying and influence efforts of the South Asian community has been the rather poor payoff it has experienced as a result of its participation in the political process, especially its involvement in the party system. My own perception is that the patronage that members have received has been woefully inadequate compared to that received by members of other groups, and it has been restricted largely to the multicultural/race relations area. One has to question this. Why have the political parties, and the political system generally, not rewarded your community more appropriately, given the political and financial support your members have given? Where are the nominations to winnable seats, which you should be receiving? Where are the senatorships? There are senators representing the Jewish, Italian, Ukrainian and West Indian communities. My impression is that such is not even being envisaged for the South Asian community. Where are the usual high-level patronage appointments to royal commissions in the areas of economic and financial policy, the key appointments to policy and fund raising committees in the various political parties and such patronage goodies as directorships of the CBC, the CRTC, the Canadian Transport Commission or the crown corporations? The answer to these questions lies, I think, in the previous four points.

5. Independence. Earlier I discussed the need for real independence of funding, decision making, and goal setting. Independence, **real** independence, is the **sine qua non** for any lobby that claims to truly represent its members' wishes and needs. Reliance on government as the preponderant source of funding and political support means vulnerability to manipulation by government. The reality of lobbying politics is simple. You control government, or it controls you. In my opinion a continued reliance on government for the money and power necessary to lobby that same government must inevitably be rewarded by distortions in the growth, leadership and goals of a lobby.

6. Ad-hoc reactive lobbying that emphasizes tactics rather than strategy and that responds to the agendas of others. There are two important points to this. The first is structural and cries out for the creation of a permanent lobby with full-time staff and a long-term strategic plan. The second part speaks to the very question of what constitutes multiculturalism and what goals an ethnic group should pursue. My own view – for what it is worth – is that you either become the "majority group" or you suffer at its hands (however unintentionally that might be). You either have a hand in determining the national agenda or you spend the rest of your life reacting to it and seeking protection from it.

7. Lack of a coherent, credible and easily understood vision capable of being communicated to and accepted by other Canadians. Contrary to what one might believe after reading pronouncements by the government and media, the concept of multiculturalism has probably not found the wide acceptance among ordinary Canadians as claimed in the popular mythology. If I am right in this (certainly many will disagree) the reasons for this lack of acceptance probably lie in the misunderstandings and misconceptions that have resulted from the real lack of a satisfying explanation of just what this concept involves. Many believe that it will lead to a balkanization of the nation – something that few would wish to see happen. I seriously doubt that this is the intention. At the same time, I doubt that there is any group in the country, government included, that possesses a clear, credible and easily-understood vision that can explain just what is intended for the Canadian society and policy for the future. The problem is that it is just such a vision that a group like South Asians in Canada must possess to lobby effectively. I might add that any group that could develop such a unifying vision would make a contribution to Canada that would be of inestimable value.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to: trace the development of the forces that have led to the new importance of lobbying (the "art" of persuasion); describe those characteristics and activities that determine the relative success or failure of a lobby; note those challenges, problems and dangers that face the South Asian community in this area. I should like to say explicitly in closing that it is not just a matter of responding to negatives. Quite the opposite! Rather, I feel that your group faces a time of great potential success and an opportunity of really historical significance. If, as this gathering supposes, the South Asian community is entering a

period of community excellence and maturity, there is the possibility of a major alteration in the power and acceptance of your community. It is my premise that a skillful use of the techniques inherent in the "art of persuasion" should lead eventually to inclusion as a charter member of the Canadian elite. This is a totally reasonable target. After all, it has happened to two other ethnic groups in the last decade and a half. It just has to happen one more time. ▶

Volunteerism – My Experience

Speech at the workshop on Volunteerism

Mubarka Alam

In 1978 I was invited by the Indian Immigrant Aid Services (IIAS) to speak to a conference on the Muslim family. I represented the Ministry of Community and Social Services at the conference.

It seems that soon after that, IIAS had a crisis on its hands regarding a Muslim family. A gentleman was in a state of shock in a hospital, and requesting assistance from a Muslim Urdu-speaking worker. IIAS had no one that fitted the description. They were quick, however, to look me up in their conference documents.

That was the beginning of my long commitment to volunteer service. For at least five years I remained their only Muslim volunteer doing frontline work for battered and deserted wives. Some cases were extremely difficult and taxing, and their files never closed. Their needs subsided a bit, and soon another crisis would hit. I have one case that I started with in 1979, which is still active and in the Supreme Court. I have been there once; now it has become a custody case, back in the courts. I continued my frontline work, got elected to the board, and then became vice-president of IIAS.

I also represented IIAS on the Family Service Association's board in the Scarborough region. During those years I learned a lot of skills. I also developed a lot of confidence in working with new people in unfamiliar situations, and representing my organization at conferences. I gradually spoke on behalf of IIAS and was invited by other Muslim groups to talk to them. I received opportunities to talk at conferences, workshops, planning events, and training.

In 1984 I became the National Women's Co-ordinator for the National Federation of Pakistani Canadians. I arranged the first National Conference for Pakistani women in March 1985. This was also a great learning experience. Currently I am the president of the Canadian Guild of Pakistani women, working on another conference.

In the last eight years, I can honestly say that I have changed and learned a lot. My community has benefitted by my having the skills and the awareness of its needs. My community, too, has come a long way since then, with many volunteers who are better informed, and better organized than before. ▶

Community Maturity

Speech at the workshop on Community Maturity

Vandra L. Masemann

The concept of "community maturity" is one that can be analysed on a variety of levels. At first glance, one might think it refers to whether a community has matured or "grown up" within the larger Ontario or Canadian context. If one seeks a biological analogy, one can make the comparison with organisms that are produced (or reproduced) and grow to maturity. Then, alas, they die.

Moreover, when we examine the word "community" in the context of this conference, we also have some difficulty. According to the 1986 Atlas of Residential Concentration for the Census Metropolitan Area of Toronto, the term that is most nearly synonymous with South Asian, "Indo-Pakistani," is made up of 11 census categories: Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Singhalese, Indian not otherwise specified, Pakistani not otherwise specified, Sri Lankan, Indian not elsewhere specified, other Pakistani-Bangladeshi, and other Indo-Pakistani.

Thus, the purpose of this brief discussion is to explore more fully the concept of community within the Canadian context, and to analyse what possibilities there are for individuals or groups to develop within that context. At the end of the discussion, it may be possible to define "community maturity" and to suggest some limitations to the concept. The goal of the analysis is to produce a list of benchmarks that will assist in the further development of the project.

The Historical Perspective

There seems to be an underlying assumption at conferences such as this that "community" is a term that denotes respectability, initiative, responsibility and participation. It is as if ethnocultural groups who are organized see the need to become involved and to gain access to the major institutions of the society. "Community maturity" in this context then refers to a group's awareness of social responsibility, determination of common goals, human resource development and enhancement of the quality of life for its members.

For communities anxious to participate in Canadian society, there is another underlying assumption that Canadian social structure has itself exhibited all of these middle class entrepreneurial virtues, and that success for newer groups may be found in emulating or joining this society.

However, it is very important to ask about the "community maturity" of Canada itself. The eminent historian-sociologist S.D. Clark in his book **The Developing Canadian Community** (1962) gives a historic picture of a less-than-mature Canada, to be sure. He points out that the frontier aspect of Canadian history has always been exemplified by new groups of people who have lost their traditional social controls and who have not yet found new ones. He describes the farming-fur trade society of New France, the rural village society of the Maritimes, the backwoods society of Upper Canada, the Gold Rush society, the prairie wheat-farming frontier, and the new industrial city. He paints a picture of continuous social upheaval, of the breakdown of traditional concepts of morality, and of the appeal of reform movements to those who were searching for new answers:

> *The forms of community organization which developed in Canada represented the adjustments of the population to their North American environment. Like similar forms across the border, they were the products of social experiments forced upon a people faced with new conditions of living. (p.186)*

Clark then goes on to summarize the forces that have curbed the frontier spirit in Canada and have led to the development of a law-abiding conservative citizenry: political development; the establishment of institutions to maintain law and order; a growth in the institution of the family; the strength of the puritan tradition; the strength of the military in the preservation of class distinctions and strengthening of the political ties of Empire or nation to create an artistocracy through land grants and political preferments; the emphasis on ethnic group loyalties as a way of resisting assimilation to American life; and the stabilizing effect of religious organizations.

It is only in the 20th century that the effects of the industrial urban society began to stabilize frontier life in any way that could be called "community maturity." Yet even in this century, a massive shift from rural to urban areas has occurred, and large numbers of immigrants have settled, mostly in the cities.

But Clark's historical perspective shows that "maturity" may be the illusion of stability created by the equality of opposing forces. It is the state a group feels in, when the forces of order and disorder are equal. They then feel able to identify goals, work with others, and share in the common life; but historically there is only a lull before the next period of rapid social change causes realignment of loyalties, shifting of goals, and readjustment of strategies. Seen in this perspective, community maturity is not an end state, but a state of relative equilibrium in the never-ceasing flow of human events.

Ethnicity and Community

A second way of analysing "community maturity" is to examine the theoretical literature on ethnicity and ethnic relations. An important reason for this approach is that ethnicity is a term that refers to individuals and their group affiliations, and the distinction between the possibilities for the individual and the group needs to be drawn.

Raymond Breton is one of Canada's most distinguished theorists in the area of ethnic relations. He relates ethnicity to social stratification in three theoretical perspectives. An analysis of these perspectives will lead us toward our task of defining "community maturity."

The three perspectives on ethnic stratification are:

1. The Individual Competition Approach. In this approach, work is seen as a collection of inter-related occupations requiring different levels of skills. Each individual in a society is seen as acting as an individual autonomous agent, selling his / her labour. Access to various kinds of information and resources will influence a person's success in the labour market.

   When we examine this model in relation to ethnicity, we note that persons in some ethnocultural groups are more or less successful in the marketplace. Breton notes that because of their cultural background, "members of different ethnic groups acquire and maintain personal attributes which affect their ability to function in the labour market" (p. 273). Ethnicity may itself engender certain rigidities in the functioning of the labour market. Discrimination is also another limiting factor.

   The importance of ethnicity in this model is that it determines individual characteristics. It provides the individual, whether buyer or seller of labour, "with a package of traits and attitudes that may be useful or detrimental in relation to labour market processes" (p. 274). Thus in a perfectly free market, individuals would seek to accentuate traits that promote success, and downplay those that would not. Another alternative would be to practise certain cultural and social activities in one's private life and to behave in a more culturally-muted fashion in the workplace. This strategy would be even more prevalent in situations of discrimination or even repression. In any case, some form of partial assimilation occurs, because the pressure on any one individual is strong.

"Community maturity" in this particular model refers to the collectivity of the individuals' characteristics, and it carries with it a strong connotation of assimilationism. In this model, individuals learn to maximize their chances in the workplace, and groups can also be of assistance in educating their members in the ways of the dominant group.

2. The Class Approach. This approach, on the other hand, concentrates more on individuals and groups as they stand defined in relation to the means of production. An individual is never an independent actor, but acts according to his / her consciousness, which is defined by his / her class position. Classes themselves may also be internally differentiated. The relative power of classes influences the outcome of events.

   Ethnicity is not inherently a part of this analysis. However, historically, certain classes may contain members of certain ethnocultural groups. Class cleavages may thus coincide with ethnic cleavages, but the dynamics of the relationship is said to stem from the class interests and not the ethnic differences.

   According to Breton, "for the class of sellers of labour, this approach sees ethnicity as a definite liability" (p. 280). Ethnicity can weaken or prevent class solidarity. It also makes possible further exploitation if class interests correspond with ethnic cleavages. For employers, ethnic difference in the supply of labour can be an asset because it can be used to undermine the position of that segment of the labour force, or it can prevent or weaken employee organization.

   "Community maturity" is a difficult concept to relate to this model because it avoids altogether the concept of class conflict that is inherent in this analysis. Moreover, the concept of community, if defined ethnoculturally, includes a large number of people who find themselves at various positions in the class structure. According to this model, such people would not be linked together in defining common goals and harnessing common resources. One way out of this intellectual tangle would be to say that the leaders of the mature community may consider that they have common cause with other members of the bourgeoisie of other ethnocultural groups, and that they are harnessing the resources of their own groups to further the interests of their particular group. This analysis would omit the perception of a working class member of the group, but perhaps might explain why umbrella ethnocultural and multicultural groups are so often organized by and consist of white-collar members.

3. The Group Competition or "Social Closure Approach." This is the one that most closely represents the thematic underpinnings of the conference here today. It includes what are considered imperfections in the analysis of the first two approaches: namely, the influence of non-economic factors that distort the working of the "perfect" model. In our case, we are interested in how ethnicity plays a role.

   The approach views the labour market as being divided into a set of occupational domains that are interconnected, and that constitute a structure of opportunities and constraints through which workers build careers. The critical social process in this approach is the extension of control over a domain, with attendant "gatekeepers" of information about jobs, sponsorship, defining the content of rules, language requirements, seniority rules, and so on. The effectiveness of a social group in establishing control over domains will influence the life chances of individual members.

   Breton states the implication of ethnicity for this approach quite clearly:

   > *This involves.... ethnic control of gatekeeping positions, ethnic sponsorship, and struggles over rules and process of selection that may directly or indirectly affect the ethnic distribution of advantages. The resources that are critical in this regard are group resources such as leadership, cohesive social networks, mutual trust, means of communication. (p.284)*

   This quote from Breton leads directly to the underlying assumptions of this workshop. "Community maturity" in this context refers to the ability of groups to mobilize in order to maximize their advantages. That is not to say that the goal here is ethnic monopoly of particular sectors of the labour force, but a more co-operative model of individual success through group effort and vice versa.

Conclusion

Community maturity thus encompasses all of the themes on the program for this conference. It refers to:

1. the community resources and access to information;
2. the ability of members to become decision-makers and collectively and individually to influence decision-makers in the government and business;

3. the networking abilities of members with each other and with similar groups;
4. the establishment of common goals and means to reach them;
5. the educational and professional preparation of group members;
6. the ability of members to juggle their public and private cultural identity;
7. the ability to deal tactfully and firmly with incidents of prejudice and discrimination and to stand assertively for social justice;
8. the willingness to work voluntarily within the community for the general good;
9. the ability to seek channels of advancement and well-being for group members;
10. the ability to join effectively as members of the general Canadian society.

My analysis has been meant to show that this entire enterprise rests on a set of historical events and a body of ideological assumptions. Unless we are clear about where we have come from and why we are here, we cannot see clearly where we are going.

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Multiculturalism in the 80s and 90s

Speech at the Luncheon Session

The Honourable Lily Munro, Minister of Citizenship and Culture

Let me start by congratulating the conference advisory committee and Riten Ray from the ministry's Citizenship Development Branch. What a great idea to spend a day searching for community excellence; there is certainly a lot of it to be found in the South Asian community.

This afternoon, I would like to share with you some of my thoughts on multiculturalism and in particular the way I feel about cultural retention and ethnicity.

Someone asked me soon after I became Minister of Citizenship and Culture whether I thought ethnicity was something of a mixed blessing.

"Cultural retention is all well and good," this person said, "but maybe by keeping the 'ethnic' label we're promoting the stereotypes we're trying so hard to break down."

When I met with your community at the Columbus centre in May, someone raised the point that being identified by race and / or colour was a problem.

A Canadian of Italian descent was quoted in the Toronto Star only this week saying that he thought Canada's policy of multiculturalism, originally intended to promote equality, had only boosted ethnic awareness instead.

In my opinion, if cultural retention has caused a problem, then our multicultural policy has been less than perfect. It is absolutely vital that people are proud of their backgrounds.

It seemed to me that we needed to redress the balance between cultural heritage programs and programs that encourage the integration ofour ethnic communities into the community as a whole. My cabinet colleagues agreed and that is one reason why my government decided to undertake a total review of Ontario's multicultural policy.

Our goal is to make multiculturalism a reality, a fact of life, to move it beyond being just a rather hazy philosophical word. We want to make our cultural diversity as evident in the boardrooms of this province as it is in the backrooms.

To help us develop effective new programs to deal with the real issues of multiculturalism in the 80s and 90s, we went to the community. Who better to give us the expertise, the skepticism and the passionate support for the ideals of multiculturalism than men and women like yourselves?

We held eight think tanks – one of them with the South Asian community – and 21 dialogues involving some 2,400 people from across Ontario.

We wanted to know what Ontarians from Windsor to Thunder Bay, and points in between, thought about Ontario's multicultural policy – where it stands now, and what new directions it should take.

The sessions were tremendously successful. We received valuable input from virtually every one of Ontario's 85 ethnocultural groups.

Our revised directions for multiculturalism in Ontario are now being formulated, and of course we're using the results from our think tanks and dialogues as well as a great deal of input from the Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism and Citizenship.

Early in the New Year, I will be able to announce a multicultural strategy – backed by concrete proposals – which will help us build the kind of Ontario we want for the 90s.

I can assure you that we did listen to what you had to say; it will be evident when we announce our revised strategy. One thing we are taking great care over is to ensure that the blessings of our richly diverse multicultural society will not continue to be blemished by ethnic labels.

We have already taken some initiatives to get the ball rolling. Let me tell you about some of them.

Citizenship and Culture organized a series of cross-cultural training sessions, which have helped to sensitize staff from a number of institutions to Ontario's multicultural reality.

One group that we particularly targeted was the communications departments of various government ministries.

They are now making special efforts to ensure that their outreach programs – be it business programs for entrepreneurs or social programs for women – are publicized within all cultural communities.

We are working with the office of Senior Citizens Affairs on a project that is addressing culture and aging. As our culturally diverse population grows older, we must ensure that our social services adapt to our changing multicultural needs.

My ministry is also working with 11 other ministries on a $5.4 million program to reduce family violence. Our role is primarily to fund an interpreter service, which will help the police, hospitals, women's shelters and other agencies respond to family violence within ethnic communities.

We're working on a joint public education project with the Ministry of Housing regarding the new rent review legislation. We want to make sure that tenants and landlords in the different cultural communities across the province get the information they need on this legislation.

What all these initiatives underscore is the government's determination to make "equal access" a reality for all Ontarians.

I wish I could give you a few examples of how this is working but we are, in most cases, still in the research stage. I hope that the next time we meet I'll be able to tell you some real-life positive stories of success.

In any case, what I really want you to know is that we are working on it. And what we want **every** citizen to know is that they have the right – and the opportunity – to fully participate in society. That participation extends to involvement in government decision-making.

When Premier Peterson set up a special council to oversee the disbursement of a special $1 billion technology fund he purposely solicited names that would reflect Ontario's multicultural strength.

That's also why we recently appointed 11 new representatives to fill vacancies on the Ontario Advisory Council on Multiculturalism and increased their budget by almost $150,000. And, as you probably know, one of the vice-presidents of the council, Mila Velshi, is from your community.

We believe if this province is to grow and prosper, we need the full participation of everyone. We can leave no source untapped.

As I said before, the South Asian community has a great deal to offer. Indeed, you are a gold mine of excellence – from intellectual excellence to cultural excellence to excellence in business; you have it all. People like those who are sharing their experiences with you later this afternoon –Mr. Gandy, Mr. Dawood, Dr. Vassanji, Ms Thakkar, Mr. Das – what wonderful role models they all are! How much they have enriched not only your community but our province as a whole! And as you strive to find a higher level of excellence within your community, you will help us in our goal of excellence for the wider community – for Ontario, indeed for Canada. We have a common goal: to build a better Ontario – a place where access and equal participation for all Ontarians is so much a fact of life we won't even have to talk about it any more.

Together, I am sure we can find the kind of effective solutions that will help us to achieve this goal. This conference is certainly an important step in that direction.

I've spoken a lot about what my ministry and my government is doing for multiculturalism in Ontario. We couldn't do any of it without your input. Keep it up. Please continue to share your ideas, your thoughts, your concerns and your joys with me and others in the ministry and in the government.

In closing, may I suggest that as we plan our Ontario of the future, one thing we must be very careful to do is make sure that ethnicity is unquestionably a blessing in Ontario – a blessing for you and a blessing for the province as a whole. ▶

Plenary Session
Living and Working in Canada

Three speeches at the Plenary Session
Menaka Thakkar

I have been asked to briefly share with you my experience of living and working in Canada. When I started thinking about it, I realized that talking about one's experience inevitably involves evaluating it, categorizing it and at times labelling it, in terms of success or failure. But success or failure can be measured only in terms of one's goals. Certainly there is a popular notion that success is measured by the amount of fame, public recognition, achievements of titles, awards or financial rewards, etc. Perhaps in terms of this popular notion I have achieved my due share of success in terms of media stories and government awards of titles, honours and financial supports. However, the true success of an artist must ultimately be measured in terms of her own goals of creativity and personal satisfaction. So I must begin by recalling what my goals were when I first came to Canada 14 years ago.

When I arrived, I had already been an established dancer in India and had performed there widely. I thought my true field and all the promise of the future was in India. I came here as a visitor to meet my sister, Sudha Khandwani who, though originally a dancer, choreographer and stage actress, was then pursuing a career in film making in this country. My other sister, Pragna, was working on her Ph.D at the University of Toronto in the field of ancient Indian theatre. My brothers Rasesh, Rashmi and Rasanidhi were pursuing careers in education and industry in this country. The whole family was held together by our father's vision of "life dedicated to art and inner growth." Our careers were, therefore complementary and supportive of one another. Of course, my other interest was to see the Canadian classical audiences and then go back after four months.

My first performance at the University of Toronto was greatly acclaimed by the audience and by the dance critics of both the **Toronto Star** and the **Globe and Mail.** I got three professional bookings the very next day. So it sounds that my success was instant. However, I soon realized two important facts.

First, there was a very small section of the larger Canadian society that was sensitive, open, and truly appreciative of other art forms, such as our classical dance. The vast majority had not developed a true openness and appreciation. A significant part of our own community was also not quite familiar with our classical art forms, and therefore often could not take pride in it. I therefore felt that increasing the awareness of our dance and culture in Canada was just as important as my own dance career in India.

This, then, became my first goal and I decided to keep my feet in both countries, spending part of the year in India and the other part in Canada.

Second, I realized that Canada was trying to become multicultural. However the word "multicultural" was often misinterpreted by both the host society and the immigrant groups. Each immigrant group was supposed to retain its own cultural heritage within its own narrow limits. The different groups remained untouched by one another, and the mainstream Canadian life would remain untouched in any essential way by all these so-called ethnic art forms. I felt that what was needed was not only multiculturalism but a true form of cross-culturalism. Our cultural heritage must become a truly accepted part of the mainstream, so that the Canadian society would feel and say "This, too, is an integral part of our large Canadian culture." This, then, became my second goal.

In order to realize these two goals, two things seemed most essential and fundamental: First, my dance must be presented not only before our own community gatherings and not only on community occasions (certainly my community was important) but must be presented before a much wider public, in places and on occasions where the mainstream classical dance forms such as ballet and modern dance were presented. If I did not offer my dance in the mainstream and earn a position for it there, no one would come out to offer me that position. It would always remain "cute" and "interesting" but ultimately an "exotic" and "ethnic" dance form. Second, I should never make any compromises with the true authenticity of my dance. I should never offer a "watered down" version that would appeal to the "North Americans." We should never underestimate their capacity to appreciate the true greatness of our dance. But our only hope lies in offering the true authentic product with dignity and without diffidence. Certainly we must change our ways of presentation and adopt higher standards of lighting, sound, stage decor, theatre management and publicity. But the dance itself must remain truly authentic.

The question now is "Have I become successful in achieving my goals by following this path?"

This question will be answered if we look at the following facts:

1. "Dance in Canada" which is the national association of Canadian classical dancers has invited me every year since 1977 to perform at their national convention – wherever it has been held – in Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg or Vancouver. At such annual conferences, Bharatnatyam, our classical dance, has become as much a part of the Canadian dance scene as ballet, modern and contemporary dance.

2. At the International Dance Conference in Sweden in 1982, Canada was represented by me and three of my Canadian students where I presented a paper on "Dance as a Vehicle of Transmitting Alien Culture." And to the delightful surprise and disbelief of the international audience, my three Canadian students performed Bharatnatyam. Our trip was partially funded by the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture. There could be no better evidence than this that our dance had found a warm acceptance in the mainstream. It was no longer considered "exotic" and "ethnic" but something that was "our own" – a thing of Canadian pride.

3. I have been invited to perform at most major art centres and dance festivals, universities and dance series along with Canadian dancers and choreographers. I have given lecture demonstrations and master classes to Canadian dancers and choreographers. Several times I have been awarded grants by the Canada Council, and Choreography Awards by the Ontario Arts Council.

4. In my dance school Nrtyakala (The Canadian Academy of Indian Dance) I now have 80 students, many of non-Indian origin. York University has granted academic credits to my students working towards a degree in dance. Several grants from the federal government have been given over the years so that I could be invited to teach on a regular basis in such distant places as Winnipeg, Regina, Thunder Bay and St. John's Newfoundland. I have also been invited as "Artist in Residence" by many school boards in Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary.

5. My greatest success came two years ago when I took my Canadian students to perform in India. We performed classical Bharatnatyam and my choreographic production "Seeta Swayamvaram" in cities like Madras, Bombay, Calcutta, Banglore, etc. My Canadian students were acclaimed both by the public and the press as complete Indian dancers.

6. My aim of achieving the true crosscultural experience of dance could not be considered fully accomplished unless I, too, allowed myself to be touched and influenced by Canadian dance forms such as ballet and modern. From this viewpoint, I have studied and jointly worked with Canadian choreographers such as Grant Stratae, Dena Lubke and Sandra Caverly. We have produced experimental choreography such as "The Blue Saturn" and "Three Faces of Shiva."

7. My greatest moments of satisfaction and true success came two years ago when I was invited as "Artist in Residence" by the school board in Vancouver. In one of the schools I was to give a dance demonstration.

The principal told me that there were two East Indian boys who were so ashamed to call themselves East Indian that they often represented themselves as Mexican and displayed great distaste for East Indian culture. When I went to their class, the two boys would not look at me but sat thoroughly uptight, nervous, and looking down at the floor. As I began dancing, they slowly began to look sideways to see how others were reacting. When they found that other boys in the class were thoroughly enjoying my dance and feeling thrilled, the two felt relaxed and slowly began to look up. They came out of their diffidence and sense of shame and felt that their Indianness was accepted and could be a source of wonder and pride. At the end of it all they came to me smiling and said that they would go to India to see the whole country. Last year I met them again in Vancouver. They said they did go to India with their parents and thoroughly enjoyed their visit. Now they were thoroughly proud of their Indianness. This, to me, was the greatest success of my dance career.

In the brief time allotted to me I have talked mostly about the end results of my efforts. The story of the long meandering road is another matter. There have been frustrations, misunderstandings, struggles and a growth into larger awareness both personally and collectively on all sides. This growth is always a painful process, at least initially; then it brings its own rewards, for it is an expansive movement. However, when momentary setbacks weigh down upon you heavily, you need support and sustenance. I am grateful that I found support from my family, a few close friends, and my own faith in my work. As I look back on the last 14 years, the one feeling that rises overwhelmingly above all the recollections of joys, sorrows, hopes, frustrations and successes is that of a great warmth, attachment and sharing that I have found in Canada generally, and in the Canadian art world in particular. To all those unrecognized and unmentioned friends, old and new, I am grateful. ▶

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Plenary Session
Living and Doing Business in Canada

Rafique Dawood

I am a member of the Dawood family of Pakistan, which established its first Canadian company in 1974. Since then the family's business in this country has expanded greatly and now comprises a number of companies, either owned privately, or jointly with Canadian parties, employing over 1,500 Canadians. Of course, this is a long way from the 20,000 employees in Pakistan and the 10,000 employees in former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.

Our business interests are mostly in textiles and chemicals. We are interested in further expansion in Canada, not only through internal growth, but also by acquiring some existing companies.

Members of our family in Canada are also involved with the Pakistani community. One member is president of the Memon Association of Canada; another member is a director of the Pakistan Canada Economic Council, and I myself am chairman of the Pakistani Canadians' Community Centre (Toronto) Inc. ▶

Plenary Session
Living and Publishing in Canada

M.G. Vassanji

I edit a literary magazine – the **Toronto South Asian Review**, also called TSAR.

Let me say first what the rationale for TSAR is. Broadly speaking, it is to give wider exposure to literature that traces some part of its meaning, its identity, and its inspiration to the cultures, traditions and literatures of South Asia.

What we do at TSAR is to encourage, publish, find audiences for, and legitimize literature that is more immediate to our experiences. To give an example: When I was growing up in East Africa, I never, once, read a book about Indian (South Asian) boys and girls. It was always about English boys and girls, and more recently, young cowboys. I am a person who loves to read, and I would often wish for books that talked of what I was going through on a dirty street so far away from any English moor.

What we are doing, incidentally, at TSAR, is projecting an image of our community – that our culture is more than rice and curry; our literature is more than the **Mahabharata**, the ghazals of Ghalib, the sayings of Buddha; that we are producing new things here – new writing, new dance forms, new paintings – and we are contributing to the future culture of Canada.

How did the **Toronto South Asian Review** begin? It is not easy to start and run a literary magazine. It requires a combination of foolhardiness, fanaticism, and ignorance. My friends and I once talked, in the wee hours of the morning in New York, about starting a literary magazine some years ago. Lots of ideas were thrown about, but as is often the case in such bull sessions, nothing happened. Then I came to Canada. Canada is a still-developing country. So many things seem possible, **are** possible. I put forward this idea during another bull session, in Toronto. And this is what happened. A friend of mine, who was making it good here, said, "Oh money – small problem. I'll get you the money – $5,000, $10,000 no problem. You get the material." Well, I got the material, with a lot of help – short stories, poetry, articles, reviews. Of course, the money did not appear. Thus was born the **Toronto South Asian Review.**

The problems? I will not go into details. They involve the detailed drudgery of putting together a magazine literally by hand: editing, pasting up, proofreading, correcting errors, using a T-square and cutter. And then agonizing over possible oversights, having nightmares of pages with slanting lines, isolated words hanging vertically in the middle of the page.

etc., because in a literary magazine no error can be tolerated; no error is too small.

Our models were the best literary magazines in the U.S. and Canada. Well, recently the **Globe & Mail** called **TSAR** one of the best in Canada. It also has been reviewed, or mentioned favourably, in the **Toronto Star**, in **Canadian Literature**, and in some overseas papers.

Recently, and on a small scale, we have started publishing books.

I don't know what the future holds for us. But I like to think that we have made a modest dent in the cultural and literary life of Canada. ▶

Concluding Remarks Summary of the Day's Events

Alok Mukherjee

When I agreed to try to summarize the day's deliberations I had no idea of the challenging task I would face. From my brief visits to the small group sessions, I discovered a very high degree of participation, a lot of high-spirited discussion, and a serious search for practical strategies. I thought my task would be made easier if I asked each workshop moderator to provide me with a brief summary of the highlights from their sessions. I should have known better!

It would take me a long time, indeed, if I were to relate in full the reports that the moderators have given me. I shall try to summarize and hope that I will have done adequate justice to the workshops. Like all editors, I have my biases, and I have no doubt that in exercising my editorial judgement I shall have left out some very significant details. Let me apologize in advance and ask for your forbearance.

It was pointed out in the morning session that there would be three major objectives for the day. First, the conference would be a skills assessment exercise. Second, participants would explore ways of developing community excellence through self-help. And, finally, we would not engage in a needs identification exercise. It would appear to me that we have done enough needs identification; the only need now is to find ways to meet those needs.

We know what the community's needs are. As the chairman of the morning session, Mr. Muinuddin, pointed out, we are now past the survival stage and it is the road ahead that we have to think about. How do we overcome the road blocks to achieving socio-economic equality?

It is this equality, rather than the maintenance of heritage and culture, that must concern us. I fully agree with our keynote speaker, Professor Iswaran, that culture is stronger than life and death. We maintain our culture in and through our daily life and practices. Our heritage and our culture shape the way in which we relate to and deal with our life experiences. And as Professor Iswaran said, an important element shaping our view of the world is the colonial experience that we all share. This experience is a part of our heritage and plays a major role in our search for equality and excellence.

It is within this framework, then, that the workshops explored practical ways and methods of achieving equality through promoting the community's excellence. The four concurrent workshops were:

1. **The Art of Persuasion**
   Facilitator: Dr. Ahmad Ijaz
   Resource: Mr. Paul Malvern

2. **Individual Growth and Development**
   Facilitator: Dr. Ari Dassanayake
   Resource: Dr. Gulshan Malik and Dr. Prem Gupta

3. **Volunteerism**
   Facilitator: Mrs. Sue Edwards
   Resource: Mrs. Mubarka Alam, Mrs. Sarita Bopanna and Mr. Deo Kernahan

4. **Community Maturity**
   Facilitator: Mr. Bala Nambiar
   Resource: Dr. Vandra Lea Masemann and Dr. Harish Jain

The first workshop centred around "lobbying" in Canadian society and some of the dos and don'ts. Mr. Malvern pointed out that lobbying has been and is used as an extremely powerful tool to influence governments in terms of what should be done. In order for lobbying to be successful, it is important to define long-term goals as well as strategies. It is equally important to regularly evaluate both. Also, targets of lobbying must be clearly identified. It is useful to develop permanent and long-term contacts within the media.

The workshop also noted that one's demands could be "sold" more successfully to government if they were shown to be of benefit to the latter as well. Another ingredient that may contribute to the chances of success is a collaborative rather than a confrontational style.

Above all, however, persuasion can be most effective if, on one hand, the lobbying group or community has "the power to deliver" and if, on the other hand, it is independent in financing and managing its affairs. For "she who pays the piper will call the tune!"

Finally, during discussion, the participants emphasized the need to get together often to review, define, and refine goals in light of results.

The second workshop, "Individual Growth and Development" consisted of excited and intense discussion of the issues involved. Participants explored ways in which one who has achieved individual growth and development would differ from those who hadn't. Some of the ingredients of growth that we as a community need to consider are: a) our belief in family values, b) the nature of prejudice within us, c) the importance of contributing to the Canadian society at large, d) mutual nurturing,

e) development of a support network whereby the more successful among us are prepared to help those who are not, and f) involvement and co-operation. Participants felt that we tend to become overcautious the more successful we become, especially when we deal with our own community. They felt there was a need to reach out and help the coming generation make wise choices.

A number of crucial issues were identified by the participants. Among these were:

- How to saddle two cultures?
- Can we defend our own values?
- Where do individuals choose role models: from their home country or Canada?
- Use of deliberate strategies to maximize participation.
- Where do we go from here?
- How do we address the prejudices among ourselves?

If this workshop was high-spirited, the third session, "Volunteerism," was marked by a serious introspective tone. At the same time, the approach was practical and the participants looked for the components of a systematic notion of volunteerism.

It was felt that a strong spiritual motivation was needed for volunteer work to be successful and effective. However, people did not mean "spiritual" in the sense of belonging to a particular institutionalized form of religion, although such affiliation may act as a strong motivation for some. Participants used the concept in its larger sense.

It was suggested that while this kind of higher motivation was necessary, the work had to be approached in a systematic way. This means that people or organizations interested in volunteerism must first identify the goals and needs they wish to achieve. Then, a network of talent must be established and training provided. Implementation of a volunteer program must be methodical; it must be constantly monitored and reviewed. Finally, there must be a provision for evaluating the program with a view to determining whether the original goals were met and whether the goals themselves needed to be refined.

Clearly, those who attended this workshop have proposed a good way to blend our traditional view of volunteerism (as something spiritually motivated) with the view prevailing in this society which takes a systems approach to volunteerism. There is much to think about in this.

The fourth workshop looked at the issue of "Community Maturity." Some of the benchmarks of community maturity identified by the resource persons are:

- the ability of members to network with each other and with similar groups;
- emphasis on the educational and professional preparation of group members;
- the ability to juggle the public and private cultural identity;
- the ability to deal tactfully and firmly with incidents of prejudice and discrimination and to stand assertively for social justice;
- the ability to seek channels of advancement and well-being for group members.

In the detailed discussion that followed the comments of the resource persons, participants agreed that in order to reflect our maturity as a community we needed to:

- develop an inventory of strengths and weaknesses;
- find ways of becoming decision makers, instead of always trying to influence decision makers;
- organize, and fight negative images, in order to fight against the prevailing perceptions and images;
- fight against stereotypes;
- fight for social justice;
- stress quality of life; move away from exclusive attention to standard of living;
- explore the possibility of establishing a centre for all South Asians as an organizing forum;
- strengthen and refine our lobbying activities.

In conclusion, one can see that the workshops have generated a large number of good, practical ideas. There are some common themes running through all of them. For instance, the need to develop networks, the need to develop clear goals, the importance of getting together on a regular basis, and the crucial necessity of working systematically and evaluating the work. I would hope that we will go away from this conference with information and ideas, and confidence that we will achieve that social, economic and political equality that my esteemed friend, Muin, spoke about this morning. ▶

Vote of Thanks

Murad Velshi

Mr. Velshi concluded the conference by noting that it had been a memorable, historic and exhilarating event, and, on behalf of the meeting, he thanked the Honourable Lily Munro, Minister of Citizenship and Culture, whose ministry sponsored it. He said that the conference would be remembered in two ways. First, it was a place where people from the greater South Asian community came together and exchanged ideas and made new friends. Second, it would be remembered as a launching pad from which the community projected itself to new and farther horizons. He urged the community members to participate and make these goals possible. ▶

Conference Assessment

The conference evaluation meeting held on January 17, 1987, was attended by 40 people. The participants were asked to fill out an evaluation form. Based on their response, the results are as follows:

1. Objectives of the conference were met:
   - very successfully 60%
   - successfully 34%
   - not so successfully 6%
2. The information in the kits was:
   - useful 70%
   - very useful 20%
   - not so useful 10%
3. The keynote address provided information that was:
   - very relevant 70%
   - not very relevant 30%
4. How effective were the workshops?
   - very effective, very informative and very adequate 80%
   - effective, informative, and adequate 20%
5. The plenary session was:
   - very beneficial 20%
   - beneficial 80%
6. How good do you think participation in the conference was?
   - very good 80%
   - good 20%

Workshops

The Art of Persuasion

The workshop was designed to enhance the understanding of the theoretical and practical aspects of lobbying, ethnic peddling, or networking. The resource person noted some salient points:

In addition to lobbying and networking, there is another important sphere of action, that of influencing appointments made by politicians. Sometimes, however, those who lobby and peddle get the appointments. This practice is not confined to any particular community. How far lobbying goes to serve the purpose of community development is a moot point. Sometimes, because of peddling, or so called influencing, we tend to drive out good people the way bad money drives good money out of the market. It is to be understood that ethnic peddling and lobbying are not necessarily conducive to community development. Some observations:

- Do not affiliate with one political party, but cultivate contacts in all political arenas.
- Do not get involved in sensitive political battles from "back home." This would only serve to alienate the South Asian community from mainstream society.
- South Asians should not have a negative approach: always have a positive approach, think in terms of higher goals and strive to achieve them.
- Learn from other ethnic groups; network with them to find out what strategies they used and which ones were most effective.
- Win the hearts and minds of the majority.
- Consolidate financially; money talks.
- Reach out and meet influential people in the churches, clubs etc.; join committees and groups working towards achieving societal goals.

Individual Growth and Development

The workshop was designed to: focus on the orientation of the individual to the social, political, cultural, and economic milieu that prevails in Canada, contrasting cultures and the value-shift from the past to the present; assess social and life skills needs and the technical and professional skills required for individual accomplishments.

Some Observations:

- South Asians in Canada should participate in the development of the country (Canada) to the maximum. Preserve the best; acquire the best. They should not just preserve everything from "back home" and not acquire anything else.
- They should take the initiative and meet people in their neighbourhoods. This is very important because South Asians are not generally visible in mainstream activities.

- They should be committed to making decisions and not complain unnecessarily, as people don't like to listen to complaints.
- They should be financially successful.
- South Asians tend to overpersonalize and make value judgements, which impede communication. They often fail to base their arguments on facts and ideas and are found to be critical of the individual who puts forward ideas / arguments.

Volunteerism

This workshop was designed to discuss the qualities of voluntary action required to respond to the changing pattern of the South Asian community in the 90s.

Some Observations:

- It was noted that the lowest number of persons attended the workshop, which made the message very clear. South Asians do not get involved in volunteer work. They do not see it as an important thing that brings enrichment to their lives.
- The South Asian community is in transition and there is more need for volunteer work. It was also pointed out that South Asians are getting more and more materialistic. This is putting a lot of psychological strain on families. Families often face traumatic experiences. They also face problems generated by a highly technological society in which they find their value system not working. How are they to strike a happy medium between old and new values? Also, it was noted that the changing world of work in Canada had implications for their lifestyles.
- Many women are now in the workforce, so the possibilities and potential for volunteer work are less as, traditionally, women used to devote their available time to volunteer work. At present they rarely search for emotional satisfaction or personal growth through volunteer work.

The workshop discussed some ways in which to increase the awareness of the need for volunteer work.

- It was pointed out that if you got something from your society you should be willing to give back. Some people do volunteer work because they are lonely; they want to be part of a community; they want to learn new skills; they want to be visible. Therefore, people who want to get involved in volunteer work must take these things into consideration. There are two kinds of volunteer work – informal, and highly organized. The latter type is prevalent in North America, and South Asians are not very familiar with it.

- It was noted that South Asians do not have the proper training, skills and tools to create the awareness of being involved in volunteer work, so they need to be trained. Three things are important in this connection: to organize, educate and resolve value conflicts. One observation was made that some people who need the most counselling are those who meet regularly in temples or mosques. They have rarely any opportunity to discuss their problems, let alone have access to services.

Community Maturity

The workshop was designed to highlight some fundamental aspects of community maturity and growth, to examine the nature and levels of maturity with respect to South Asians.

Some Observations

- It is important to determine and define common goals.
- A community's maturity is reflected in the level and quality of participation in the mainstream activities. It is also reflected in the community's capability to respond to new situations without much stress; for example, the issue of the generation gap.
- It is important to organize. South Asians have been doing things in small groups, so there is a need to organize and get all things done in a concerted manner, in order that, as a community, South Asians can forge ahead and achieve more concrete results.
- It is important to network.
- Leadership should consist of people who are able and capable of making decisions involving the community, and bringing about the intended changes that follow a plan of action.
- It is important to have a more broadbased participation by the community. Weaknesses should be overcome by discussion. What can be done to overcome them? As a community, South Asians get too hung up on their weaknesses.
- Immediate and long-term goals should be defined. A long-term goal should include involvement with youth, who should be helped and enriched in their academic and professional work.
- The South Asian community should highlight its achievements and accomplishments through the media.
- It should get involved politically.

General discussion arising out of Community Maturity workshop

The tone of the conference was "searching our souls" for community excellence. The question arises: Are South Asians getting their rightful and just share in this society? If not, how are they going to get this share?

There are three possible ways: a) individual excellence, or individual growth, b) maturity, c) as an integrated community to develop a high level of participation through volunteerism. Are South Asians mobilizing their resources as individuals or as an integrated cohesive group? What would that group be called? South Asians cannot, it is argued, achieve anything as mere individuals. In order to get their rightful share, they are to contribute to society. Unless South Asians are prepared to make sacrifices, they cannot achieve anything. To gain respect they have to be financially established and make financial contributions.

If South Asians are going to be a viable community in Canada, then this entity "South Asian" should be recognized. This group will have to make a commitment as South Asians and form a national congress of South Asians so that people of South Asian origin have something to identify with on a Canada-wide basis.

What are the binding forces between South Asians? There are basically two: colour, and the problems peculiar to South Asians. But South Asians are Canadians, and if other Canadians separate themselves from South Asians, it is also because South Asians have not walked toward them, and this is important to understand. South Asians must set their social goals and participate in the social and educational levels of this society, e.g. their children sometimes have problems at school but South Asians rarely become involved in school board issues. They are not present in the city council, or in Parliament. They are not, it seems, interested in acting on their own behalf.

Plan of Action

- First of all, identify the community's most pressing needs; then determine long-term and short-term goals and strategies to enable the community to move forward.
- As individuals, accept others and then in return be accepted.
- Learn how to trust one another. Make a commitment to one another. Stand beside each other.
- Increase consciousness about social participation.

- Bring South Asians into the mainstream of Canadian life. Take part in politics. Only then can South Asians be recognized as a community.
- Pool resources and utilize them for the benefit of the community. Build a common consciousness; there is still some factionalism. South Asians must consider themselves as a body, and pool their resources.
- Develop a communications network, through a good newspaper or magazine containing useful information regarding social issues.
- Form an umbrella organization. Nominate a protem committee of seven with broad terms of reference, encompassing all the workshops, giving them a time frame of three months, and the authority to ask other communities to participate and put forward proposals at the next meeting.

Function of the Advisory Committee after the conference

Although the advisory committee is temporary, it should not be disbanded immediately. If it is desirable to form a South Asian organization, skills are needed to motivate people, organize them and enhance their participation.

- The ministry's resources should be used to organize some workshops on developing the necessary skills, as a follow-up.
- Necessary research should be conducted to study existing organizations so that suggestions can be put forward regarding another. ●